A Briefe account of

SOME EXPRESSIONS

IN

Saint *ATHANASIUS*

HIS

CREED:

For the satisfaction of those who think themselves thereby oblig'd, to believe all things therein contain'd to be absolutely necessary to SALVATION.

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A briefe account of ſome Expreſſions in ATHANASIUS *his* Creed, *&c.*

FOraſmuch as many who are ſufficiently convinc'd of the *truth*, are yet unſatisfi'd as to *the abſolute neceſſity of believing*, all the Articles of the *Athanaſian Creed* (which yet * *ſeverall paſſages* therein ſeem but too dogmatically to impoſe); I thought I might do a peice of acceptable ſervice to endeavour to remove that ſcruple, and thereby engage them the more readily to conforme to *the Liturgy of our Church*. In proſecution of which deſigne though I might take another courſe, by demonſtrating that *moſt things* in it are *abſolutely neceſſary* to ſalvation; yet I ſhall chuſe rather to ſhew, that our Church doth not *propoſe* that Creed to us *as ſuch*, becauſe that will be abundantly ſatisfactory to all thoſe who are convinc'd of the truths it containes. Now this I ſhall do in *theſe three aſſertions*,

* *Whoſoever will be ſaved: before all things it is neceſſary that he hold the* Catholick Faith. *Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly* &c. again, *it is neceſſary to everlaſting ſalvation that he alſo believe rightly in the incarnation* &c. *This is the Catholique Faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be ſaved.*

1. That our Church doth not require an *explicite beliefe* of *all the Articles* of that Creed, *as absolutely necessary* to Salvation.
2. That it doth not require *such a beliefe of all things* contain'd in the *Apostles Creed*, though that be more *simple*, and receiv'd by *all that professe themselves* Christians.
3. And lastly, that the *Articles of our Church* give sufficient testimony to *my opinion*, and to both the former assertions, upon which it is cheifly built.

And *first of all*, that our Church doth not require an *explicite beliefe* of all the Articles of *Athanasius* his *Creed as absolutely necessary* to Salvation, is evident from her *formes of Baptizing* both *infants* and *adult persons*. For she there admits both sorts to baptisme (and consequently to the hopes of Salvation) upon the profession of *the Apostles Creed*, which is not so *explicit* as that of *Athanasius*. The strength of which argument will more fully appeare, if we consider the opinion the *Church of England* hath of *Baptisme*, which is that it renders the baptiz'd person *a* † *Child of God* (and where the force of it is not voided by actuall sin) *an* * *undoubted Heire of Heav'n*. For if it admits even *adult persons* to the participation of that *Baptisme* (which it acknowledgeth to make them *the Children of God*, and *Heires of Eternall Glory*) and that too upon their

† *Seeing now dearly beloved brethren that* this Child *or* these Persons *are regenerate and grafted into the body of Christs Church.* Forme of Baptizing Infants and those of riper years.

* *It is certaine by Gods Word that Children which are baptiz'd dying before they commit actuall sin are undoubtedly sav'd* Rubr. of Publique Baptisme, &c.

their profeſſion of their beliefe of *the Apoſtles Creed*; then doth it not require an *explicit beliefe* of *Athanaſius* his, as *abſolutely neceſſary* to Salvation. For as it is certaine, that the *Apoſtles Creed* is not ſo *explicit* as that of *Athanaſius*; ſo is it no leſſe, that no adult perſon can be a *Child of God* and *an Heire of Heav'n*, without believing all thoſe things that are *abſolutely neceſſary* to Salvation. Let it therefore remaine as an undoubted truth, that *our Church* doth not require an *explicite* beliefe of *all* the *Articles* of *Athanaſius* his *Creed* as *abſolutely neceſſary* to Salvation. But

Secondly, Neither doth ſhe require *ſuch a beliefe* of *all things* in *the Apoſtles Creed*, though *that* be the more *ſimple* and *receiv'd by all that profeſſe themſelves* Chriſtians; the *Church of England* propoſing it not *in all and every Article* as *abſolutely neceſſary* to be believ'd, but as the *Condition of* that *Communion* into which ſhe admits us *upon the profeſſion* of it. For

1. She requires not *any ſuch aſſent* in the *forementiond formes of Baptiſme*, as wil be evident to any that ſhall conſult them.
2. If ſhe thought *all thoſe Articles abſolutely neceſſary to be believ'd*, ſhe could not make *any diſtinction* between them as *to the neceſſity* of believing them; becauſe there can be *none* in thoſe Articles which are *abſolutely neceſſary* to be believ'd: But the Church makes *ſuch a diſtinction* between the *ſeverall Articles* of the *Apoſtles Creed*, calling ſome

principall

principall and *others not*: The Minor is evident from the *Church-Catechisme*, where after the recitation of the Articles of the *Apostles Creed*, she there demands of the *Catechumen* what he doth *chiefly* learn in the *Articles of his beliefe*. And the *Answer* that is return'd is *no other* than this,

First I learn to believe in God the Father who hath made me and all the world.
Secondly in God the Son who hath redeemed me and all mankind.
Thirdly in God the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.

3ly, She allowes of *severall interpretations* of *some Articles*, and those too *quite different* from one another, and cannot therefore be suppos'd, to propose *all the Articles* as *absolutely necessary* to be believ'd. For that which is *such*, must beare the *same sense* to *all persons*, because *all men* have the *same concernments* in what is *absolutely necessary* to be believ'd: But those Articles which may be receiv'd with *different interpretations*, cannot bear the *same sense* to *all persons*, and cannot therefore be thought to be *propos'd* as *absolutely necessary* to be believ'd. I instance in the Article of *Christs descent into Hell*, which it is *notorious* the Church of England allowes men to receive in *severall senses*; the most *Considerable members* thereof having deliver'd *different*

rent interpretations; and that too without *any censure* from the Church for so doing. Thus the late Learned Dr *Hammond* in his *Practicall Catechisme* understands by *Christs descent into Hell*, his *continuance for some time in the state of the dead*, and Dr *Pearson* his descending into the *common receptacle of departed Souls*: whilst *others* understand it of his descent into *hell properly so call'd*, either to *triumph over infernall spirits* as *some*, or as *others* for other reasons; and yet all of them agreeably enough with the *third Article* of our Church, which only makes his *descent* into hell *distinct* from his *death* and *buriall*. I conclude then that *Christs descent into hell*, is not propos'd to us to be believ'd as *absolutely necessary* to salvation; for if it were, it cannot be thought the Church would allow *of so many interpretations*, and receive those into her communion who accept the Article *in any one*.

4ly, and lastly, There are *many things* in the *Creed*, which are but *circumstances* of the *Articles*; as Christs suffering *under Pontius Pilate*, and rising *the third day*. For though those *circumstances* are set down so clearly in Scripture, that no man can doubt of them, and the beliefe of them may be therefore exacted of us as the *condition* of our communion; yet can they not be thought to be *absolutely necessary* to be believ'd. Because the *not-believing* of what is *such*, must *necessarily damne*

us,

us, which I ſuppoſe no man yet did ever affirme of the *not believing thoſe circumſtances*; provided the perſon *not believing* them, did believe *the Articles themſelves*, and was utterly unacquainted with thoſe circumſtances *through no fault of his* at all. 'Tis true, it is hard to ſuppoſe any ſuch ignorance among Chriſtians; but the ſuppoſition however is not impoſſible, and for ought I know there may have bin ſuch ignorance in the late licentious times, when the *Apoſtles Creed* was turn'd out of the Church, and the Scripture ſeldome read in *the Aſſemblies*. The *circumſtances* then of the *Articles* are not *abſolutely neceſſary* to be believ'd; and no man can think, *this* or *any other* Church ever propos'd them as ſuch: eſpecially if he conſider, that the *Papiſts themſelves* are not ſo great *impoſers*, and accept their weak diſciples upon an *implicit faith* of their determinations.

III. *The third and laſt thing*, upon which I ground my opinion, is the *expreſſe words* of one of the 39 *Articles*. For in the *eighth* of thoſe 39, it is deliver'd in expreſſe termes, *that the three Creeds of the Church ought* therefore *thoroughly to be believ'd, becauſe they may be prov'd by moſt certain warrant of Holy Scripture*; laying the *neceſſity of our thoroughly believing* them, not upon the *abſolute neceſſity* of the things therein contain'd, but upon *the certaine warrant they have from the Holy Scripture*. But ſo is it *neceſſary* for me to believe that *there was*

ſuch

ſuch a man as Solomon, and that he did *ſometime determine a nice caſe between two harlots in Judea*, becauſe there is *certain warrant* both for the one and the other in *Holy Scripture*; and yet no man did ever affirme, that a man *could not be ſav'd* without believing them. The difference between *ſuch truths*, and thoſe that are *abſolutely neceſſary* to ſalvation is this: without *a poſitive beliefe* of the latter it is *impoſſible* to be ſav'd, whilſt *the not believing*, yea *the disbelieving* of the former cannot prejudice me at all; unleſſe I have bin either ſlothfull in the enquiry after truth, or have refus'd to give up my aſſent to it after it hath been duly propoſed to me. Do I then ſay that the *three Creeds* contain no other truths, than what I may be ignorant of without the loſſe of eternall glory? Far be it from me ſo to affirme; for I believe the moſt things in each of them are *abſolutely neceſſary* to ſalvation, ſuch as I account *the ſimple doctrine* of the Trinity, *the death* and *reſurrection of Chriſt* &c; But this I ſay, that there are *ſomethings* in thoſe *Creeds*, which are not *abſolutely neceſſary* to ſalvation; *and that* our Church is ſo tender even in thoſe *Articles* it preſſes upon the *Clergy*, that it doth not diſtinguiſh between *fundamentalls* and *others*, but recommends the creeds *in the groſſe* to be receiv'd by all her children, without acknowledging any other neceſſity of the beliefe of the *whole*, than what ariſeth *from the certain warrant* they have in *the word of God*, and a due propoſall of them to the underſtanding. The only thing that can be *objected* againſt the precedent diſ-

course is, the *forementiond passages* in severall places of *Athanasius* his *Creed*, which seem to make the *whole* of that nature, that a man *cannot be sav'd* without believing it. But to this I answer,

1. That *those passages* are *no part* of the Creed it selfe, and that it cannot be thought, *our Church* intended to burthen us with them, after so *great evidence* as I have produc'd to the contrary: It may more rationally be believ'd, that allowing *the whole doctrine* therein contain'd to be of *very great importance*, she was unwilling to put it in *other termes* than *in those it had been transmitted* to her, especially having sufficiently fortifi'd us *against the harshnesse* of the expressions.

2. That *most things* in the Creed are *absolutely necessary* to be believ'd, and that *the rest* are so too *after a due proposall* to the understanding; which few men can say hath been wanting in this Church of ours, where the Scriptures, wherein they are not obscurely contain'd, have been so duly read and explicated. I will conclude this briefe discourse with a passage of Dr *Hammonds*, and I do it the rather because he is known to have been *one of this Churches greatest Champions*. It is in his *Treatise of Fundamentalls*. c. 10. Sect. 3. "As for the censures "annext *to the Athanasian Creed*, 1. in the beginning "[*that except a man keep the Catholique Faith* (of "which this is set down, not as the entire forme,

but

" but an explication or interpretation of ſome " parts of it) *whole and undefiled, he ſhall doubtleſſe* " *periſh everlaſtingly*] 2ly, In the middle [*he that* " *will be ſaved muſt thus think*] and [*it is neceſſary* " *to everlaſting Salvation that he alſo believe rightly* " *in the Incarnation* &c.] And 3ly, in the end [*this* " *is the Catholick Faith, which except a man believe* " *faithfully he cannot be ſav'd*] I ſuppoſe they muſt " be interpreted by their *oppoſition* to thoſe *Here-* " *ſies* that had invaded the *Church*, and which " were acts of *carnality* in them that broached, " and maintained them, againſt the *Apoſtolick* " *Doctrine*, and contradictory to that *foundation* " which had bin reſolv'd on, as *neceſſary* to bring " the world to the *obedience of Chriſt*, and were " therefore to be *anathematiz'd* after this manner " and with *deteſtation* branded and baniſhed out " of the *Church*; Not that it was hereby defin'd " to be *a damnable ſin*, to faile in the *underſtanding*, " or *believing* the full matter of any of thoſe *expli-* " *cations*, before they were *propounded*, and when " it might more reaſonably be deem'd not to be " any fault of the *will*, to which this were impu- " table.

Rom. 14. 19.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edifie another.

FINIS.